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A STATEMENT OF CONCERN FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION IN PHILADELPHIA,
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN IN
UNDERPRIVILEGED, SEGREGATED AREAS.

PHILADELPHIA COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS, PA.

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THIS 1960 STATEMENT OF THE COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
DESCRIBES THE PROBLEM OF DE FACTO SEGREGATION IN
PHILADELPHIA. THE EXTENT OF SCHOOL AND FACULTY SEGREGATION IS
INDICATED, AND THE REASONS FOR ITS EXISTENCE ARE DISCUSSED.
IT IS FELT THAT THE CULTURAL DEFICIT WHICH RESULTS FROM
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND SEGREGATION REQUIRES COMPENSATORY
EFFORTS BY THE SCHOOLS. INTENSIVE GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING
PROGRAMS ARE NEEDED TO DEVELOP THE VOCATIONAL, ACADEMIC, AND
PERSONAL POTENTIAL OF NEGRO CHILDREN. AND TO FOSTER WHOLESOME
INTERGROUP RELATIONS. COUNSELING BUDGETS SHOULD BE INCREASED
AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS PROGRAMS MADE MANDATORY. THE LACK OF
CONFIDENCE IN THE SCHOOLS BY BOTH THE NEGRO COMMUNITY AND THE
WHITES WHO FLEE THE CITY IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM WHICH NEEDS
ATTENTION. PHILADELPHIA SHOULD OFFER QUALITY EDUCATION IN
EVERY SCHOOL AND SHOULD ACHIEVE A BETTER RACIAL BALANCE OF
TEACHERS IN BOTH THE CITY AND THE SUBURBS. ALSO NEEDED ARE
RESEARCH TO ASCERTAIN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DE FACTO
SEGREGATION AND LOWER EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS AND STEPS TO
IMPROVE EDUCATION IN SEGREGATED SCHOOLS. (NH)

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
800 COMMERCIAL TRUST BUILDING
PHILADELPHIA 2, PENNSYLVANIA

May 17, 1960

INFORMATION RETRIEVAL CENTER ON THE DISADVANTAGED
Baruch Graduate School of Education, Yeshiva University

A STATEMENT OF CONCERN FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION IN PHILADELPHIA

with particular reference

to the special needs of children in underprivileged,

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

segregated areas

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The Problem in General Terms

The problem described here is unique to the school systems of the large metropolitan areas of which Philadelphia is probably quite typical.

The causes of the problem lie more outside the school system than within it but a major part of the solution must be found by and within the public schools.

The problem has at least four major facets and several others which hinge upon those:

a. The massive and growing pattern of de facto racial segregation in the public schools, largely as a reflection of residential patterns but partially a product of other factors.

b. The concentration of large numbers of underprivileged, culturally deprived Negro children in particular areas and particular schools resulting in the emergence of the so called "problem schools" with concomitant problems of low pupil and faculty morale, a stigma attached to the school, a high ratio of pupil and teacher turnover, low levels of academic achievement and totally inadequate preparation of the children for their future role as adult citizens. (This is not to suggest that predominantly Negro schools

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are per se problem schools. It appears that some predominantly Negro schools have standards that compare favorably with other very good schools that are well integrated or predominantly white.)

c. The fact that those Negro children who grow up and go to school in largely segregated situations require special counselling and guidance to enable them to make the right beginnings as employees and as citizens in a larger society dominated by white people who are not fully prepared to accept Negroes as equals or with sympathy and understanding.

d. The fact that the majority of white children grow up in neighborhoods and attend schools which are exclusively or very predominantly white and therefore require special training, counselling and guidance to prepare them for responsible citizenship in a nation and world in which distinctions as to color, race and ethnic origin are harmful to society.

The Commission's Interest and Concern

Under the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter the Commission on Human Relations is charged with administering and enforcing all statutes and ordinances prohibiting discrimination against persons because of race, color, religion, or national origin and with carrying on educational programs to promote the equal rights and opportunities of all persons regardless of their race, color, religion, or national origin.

The Charter grants the Commission broad powers and responsibilities. It may receive and investigate complaints of, or initiate its own investigation of, practices of discrimination against any person because of race, religion, or national origin. It may hold public hearings and make public its findings. The exercise of these powers is not limited to legally prohibited discrimination. Public hearings and public findings are authorized in the belief that they will promote education, inhibit discriminatory practices, and yield factual data for any necessary action, executive or legislative (1).

Inequality of opportunity based on race, religion, or national origin is of primary concern to the Commission. Since it can be demonstrated that racially segregated schools often result in inferior educational opportunity, the interest of the Commission in this problem is apparent.

The Commission's specific interest in equality of opportunity is directly related to the city's general welfare. The existence of a large group of persons with underdeveloped capacities in the long run weakens the city. Its productivity is diminished and its burdens increased. To ignore its potential assets is to threaten the city's future.

The Problem of De Facto Segregation

How Much Segregation Is There?

Unfortunately much additional information to that herein reported is required for a definitive analysis of the extent and effects of de facto school segregation in Philadelphia. However, sufficient facts are available to indicate that there is a considerable amount of segregation.

In 1958 the Commission on Human Relations conducted an analysis of certain factual data about school enrollment and teacher assignment. The School District of Philadelphia cooperated by supplying some data for the years 1956-1958. A summary of this analysis appears below.

Enrollment:

Although 39% of Philadelphia's school children in 1956 were Negroes, half the schools in the city had a non-white enrollment of 20% or less, and 21% had no Negroes enrolled in them. On the other hand, there were 17 schools (7% of the total) that were all Negro in enrollment.

The dividing point between a segregated and an integrated school is purely arbitrary, and various ratios have been used in the past as a basis for definition. In this report a proportion of four or more children of one race to one child of another race is considered an index of segregation. Twenty-six

percent of the elementary schools and 21% of the junior and senior high schools had enrollments of 80% or more Negro children, while 51% of the elementary schools and 46% of the junior and senior high schools had enrollments of 80% or more white children. It is apparent that junior and senior high schools were somewhat more integrated (33% with enrollment of Negro pupils of 21% through 79%) than elementary schools (23% integrated). Certain comparisons are available between two different school years. The proportion of segregated schools in 1956 was 76% and in 1957 was 78%. The amount of segregation therefore increased slightly in one year's time.

Considering the trend toward increasing residential segregation it is logical to assume that the amount has increased since 1957, with a resultant increase in the amount of de facto segregation in the public schools.

Teacher Assignment:

Of almost equal importance in the problem of de facto segregation is the assignment of teachers. If schools in which Negro pupils predominate are also taught in large part or completely by Negro teachers the effects of segregation are increased.

Negro teachers constituted 17% of the total teaching staff in Philadelphia in 1956. (By 1959 the figure had risen to 27%.) * Of the Negro teachers in 1957, 84% taught in schools with 80% or more Negro enrollment. Only 15% of schools with 20% or lower Negro enrollment had any Negro teachers.

Of schools that had no vacancies in 1958, 73% were schools with 20% or lower Negro enrollment. Of per-diem substitute replacements, 53% occurred in schools with 80% or more Negro pupils, but only 15% in those with predominantly white pupils.

* The Sunday Bulletin, Oct. 25, 1959

Why Segregation Exists

School segregation is part of a whole pattern of discrimination and segregation in community life. Basic to this pattern is a marked increase in non-white population in the central city areas with concomitant outward movement of the white population beyond the political boundaries of the city and into the school districts of suburbia. The increase in the non-white population in Philadelphia amounted to 50% between 1940 and 1950 and to 27% between 1950 and 1956. During these periods the white population of the city remained constant or may have decreased slightly. By 1956 about 23% of the city's population was non-white. Because the Negro population is a younger one and also less likely to make use of private and parochial schools, the city's public school enrollment reflected an even higher rate (39% Negro).

This rapid increase in the non-white population became concentrated in ever denser "black belts" or "ghettos." By 1958, 75% of all Negro registered voters resided in voting divisions where Negroes represented at least 60% of the voting population. Since schools serve the neighborhoods in which they are located, the result has been segregated schools.

Of paramount importance in maintaining and increasing residential and school segregation is the highly restricted and discriminatory housing market, which severely limits the housing opportunities of the city's Negro population to selected geographical areas. A basic factor in the maintenance of residential segregation is continued discrimination in employment, which affects income and limits the home-purchasing power of the Negro population.

The relationship between residential and school segregation is often similar to a vicious circle. An increasing proportion of Negro children in one school may add to the pressures encouraging white parents to move out of a changing neighborhood; as they move out Negroes move in and the proportion of Negro children in the school accordingly rises again. This fact was

recognized in a recent volume sponsored by the Commission on Race and Housing (2): "Of all the neighborhood-influencing institutions, by far the most crucial is the school."

Other factors leading to higher concentration of Negro children in particular public schools are as follows: (a) the comparatively much smaller ratio of Negro children in parochial and private schools and (b) the tendency of white parents to arrange transfer of their children to other schools where the ratio of Negro children is smaller.

The causes of teacher segregation are related in part to the above factors. In addition, the assignment and transfer policies of the school system play a part. Teachers may request transfers after serving for two years in the school to which they were first assigned, and such transfers are granted on the basis of seniority within a school. This policy results in a higher rate of turnover in those schools that are considered by many teachers as undesirable teaching posts.

Why De Facto Segregation Is Bad

The de facto segregation of schools outside the South does not carry with it all the stigma and injury of official exclusion. That is, the Negro parent and child know that the segregated school is a product of the non-official practices of the housing market rather than the official policy of government or school authorities. Except for this difference the net effect upon achievement, personality development, and citizenship may be as serious in one instance as in the other.

The psychological effects of segregation have been cited by many authors. Personality damage to the Negro child in the form of fear and distrust, emotional conflict, self-doubt, insecurity, have all been referred to again and again (3,4,5). The words of the Supreme Court 1954 decision are widely quoted: "To separate [Negro children] from others of similar age and qualifi-

cations solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone" (6). This psychological damage affects not only the individual but also group relationships. It is almost impossible for Negroes and whites in a segregated society to see each other as human beings with similar needs, fears, and aspirations (3). Instead they see society in terms of sharply divided groups, which results in heightened tension between these groups (4).

In a society that believes in individual initiative, segregation imposes an ironic situation: The Negro child feels stigmatized without being able to overcome the stigma through his own efforts (4), while the white child enjoys a false superiority gained through no effort of his own (7). He may, in addition, develop unrealistic fears and hatreds of the minority group that will seriously affect his adult relationships in later years.

Deprived minority children in segregated schools have been observed to have greatly reduced drives toward accomplishment (8). Differences in achievement levels between white and non-white schools were demonstrated in a New York study (9). Disparity in achievement may be attributed, along with lowered morale due to segregation, to the inadequate facilities and instruction that seem to be an inevitable part of the segregated school system (8). As pointed out in a survey of public education in America, segregated schools "often offer an inferior type of instruction owing to inability to engage good teachers, problems endemic to less favored areas such as juvenile delinquency, and the lack of interest in the schools" on the part of some school administrations (10).

Another result of school segregation that must not be overlooked is its limiting effect on diversity of contacts. Association with children of many backgrounds is a positive educational experience of which no child should be deprived (11). In such association the less fortunate child has the opportunity

to acquire goals and aspirations not limited by his own social group (8).

Every American child should have access to the wide horizons available in a country enriched by a variety of ethnic groups and races.

The Negro child in a segregated school who has only Negro teachers and the white child with only white teachers are both deprived of rewarding experiences. Each may be led to unwarranted assumptions regarding his own group and acquire a false picture of what constitutes democracy.

The Problem of a Cultural Deficit

The history of racial discrimination and segregation in the United States has imposed social, psychological, political, economic, and physical handicaps that have made it impossible for many Negro families to give their children the same opportunities as most white children enjoy. Lower incomes, inferior educational systems, inadequate community facilities, and the whole caste system in which Negro Americans have been relegated to a second-class citizenship have resulted in an inheritance of material and cultural poverty. In addition, the disorganizing effects of urban life that so many southern Negro migrants experience have added to this cultural deficit. For instance, many Negro children lack exposure to books and magazines, encouragement and guidance by parents, and surroundings conducive to study. Because of all these handicaps, these children are not able to progress in school at the normal rate.

In any school with a large proportion of these deprived children, parents of more privileged children, fearing a lowering of standards, seek to move out of the neighborhood or to transfer their children to "better" schools. Since white people can find other housing more readily, the process of racial de facto segregation is speeded up.

While this problem is a product of the past history of discrimination and segregation it is unlikely that the simple removal of racial barriers in

the school systems will resolve it. Serious injury has been done and steps must be taken to compensate for it. Insofar as racial segregation in the public schools continues to be geared to residential patterns, it is likely that desegregation will be dependent upon the capacity of Negroes to compete economically with whites in the housing market. This in turn requires that a much larger segment of the Negro population be fully trained and fully competitive in employment. Thus, it might be said that in this instance the egg may precede the chicken. Full equality in jobs and housing must be guaranteed, but the child from the culturally deprived Negro family must be adequately educated and trained before he can utilize the opportunity to enter the integrated community.

This does not suggest any delay in the process of desegregation. It does mean that herculean efforts must be made to provide all the educational resources requisite for assuring fully adequate education for all the children who come from culturally deprived families whether they are in integrated or de facto segregated schools.

At the moment this Commission can provide no data to indicate the dimensions of this particular problem. The public school authorities have indicated that one-third of the Philadelphia school population are "slow learners." Of course many of those are white, and a great many Negro children fall into the upper two thirds. Also, some of the Negro "slow learners" have problems other than those of living in culturally deficient neighborhoods and homes. Nevertheless, it may be assumed that a large segment of the "slow learners" could be moved into the "normal" categories if the schools were equipped with resources and technics to compensate for the deficits.

Guidance and Counselling Needs

It is generally agreed that the guidance program for the Philadelphia Public Schools is something of a model for the nation. However, even the best falls far short of the need. Counselling programs are of special importance to overcoming discrimination, compensating for cultural deficiencies, and promoting more wholesome intergroup relations. Three aspects of the problem are here emphasized.

a. Even the most adequate Negro pupil with an excellent school record faces special difficulties in finding employment commensurate with his abilities. There was a time when school guidance personnel attempted to provide what was considered "realistic" guidance in choosing the vocations in which Negroes were normally accepted. Such guidance has fallen into disrepute. Instead, the counsellor today may insist that he is "color blind" and that he provides exactly the same advice to either white or Negro pupil.

Proper and adequate counselling of Negro youth requires that the pupil be encouraged to develop his full potentialities and especially prepared to overcome the barriers of discrimination. This should not conform to the above definition of "realistic" nor should it be "color blind." This requires great sensitivity and extensive training in human relations for the counselling staff. There needs to be much more experimentation and reporting on this subject.

b. The less adequate Negro pupil whose problems are largely a product of cultural deficiency requires a great deal of help in the form of counselling, not only in the process of choosing and training for a vocation but also in developing aspiration and motivation, learning proper study habits, overcoming emotional barriers, and developing wholesome parental support.

c. Hostility toward members of other racial, ethnic, or religious groups is very often symptomatic of other deeper and less apparent emotional problems which are injurious to the child and should be brought to light.

However, even where the hostility is indicative of the norm for the school, the neighborhood, or the home, it is cause for concern. The careful probing of intergroup hostility and prejudice by well trained counsellors having sufficient time to detect and explore such matters as well as to provide wholesome counsel would serve as a major contribution toward improved intergroup relationships.

Teaching Open-Mindedness and Appreciation for Others

A major challenge to American education is the emotional and psychological preparation of children for living in a nation and world composed of many racial, cultural, and religious groups, and the understanding that no one group is superior or dominant in relation to the others. With the democratic form of government under challenge everywhere in the world today, it is obvious that one of education's greatest tasks is that of training future citizens for effective citizenship.

Few school systems have done as well as Philadelphia 's in planning curriculum materials and in fostering faculty training along these lines. A Schools Committee on Human Relations and a full-time coordinator have given impetus. This program is best described in the report, "The Development of Intergroup Education in the Philadelphia Public Schools."

It is difficult to estimate the effectiveness of such a program.. It is generally conceded that young people today demonstrate more open-mindedness than their elders. This would suggest that the educational system is responsible. What is less apparent is whether the open-mindedness is oriented toward affirmative civic action or is satisfied with being more tolerant and less hostile. There is some indication that while prejudice and chauvinism are in disrepute there may be little understanding of such specific current issues as racial segregation vs. integration, anti-Semitism, population mobility, and the like.

While the large city school system is forced by circumstance to face these issues there is some question whether the schools of smaller cities are as sensitive to the problem.

Community Concern

The Commission is also concerned with the apparent lack of confidence in the public schools on the part of many people in many groups but particularly a large segment of the Negro public. Following is a sample of the allegations frequently made:

(a) In a petition to the Board of Public Education on February 10, 1959, the Educational Equality League expressed its concern about restricted assignments of Negro teachers and their lack of promotional opportunities. The League pointed also to racially discriminatory assignments and transfers of pupils.

(b) The Schools Committee of the Germantown Community Council has expressed concern over the schools' lack of a policy on integration, particularly with regard to teacher placement. They are in favor of action to prevent individual schools from sustaining a loss of racial balance in pupil enrollment.

(c) The belief has been expressed that many of the schools attended primarily by Negro children are handicapped by old buildings, poor equipment, and less qualified teachers. There is an impression that these schools have been stigmatized by labels indicating lower average ability and achievement.

(d) A frequently voiced complaint is that the system for appointment of members to the Board of Education has resulted in a Board which is not representative of either the population as a whole or of the public school population, and is therefore less responsive to the needs of those to be educated.

Admittedly these opinions have not been documented in any scientifically conducted poll. The Commission believes this lack of confidence, whether justified or not, represents a serious problem. It is unlikely that a child will respond properly to teacher and school if he senses that his parents are critical and apprehensive about the school he attends. It is important that the schools should, in fact, fully meet the educational needs of every segment of the population and equally important that the public have confidence, that they do.

While evidence to corroborate the above allegations is lacking at present, the experience of a city in a similar situation is available and may be presumed to have a bearing on some of them. The Public Education Association, after a survey of the New York City Schools in 1958, made public its findings (quoted in Ref. 8): The segregated non-white schools, mostly in rundown neighborhoods, were considerably older, more crowded, and less adequate than the other schools in the system. For example, the average age of non-white elementary school buildings was 43 years, compared with 31 years for white schools; for junior high schools the figures were 35 years and 15 years respectively for non-white and white schools. In the non-white schools the faculty was apt to be less experienced: 78% of the teachers in white elementary schools were on tenure, but only 58% in non-white schools. For junior high schools there was a similar picture: 62% on tenure in white schools but 47% in non-white schools. In addition, pupil achievement in terms of test scores at three different grade levels was lower for non-white pupils than for white pupils in both reading and arithmetic.

In view of the facts already established, the allegations mentioned above, and the New York City evidence, it is believed that many of these conditions exist in Philadelphia. The need for additional information about the extent, nature and effects of school segregation in Philadelphia is apparent.

What Has Been Accomplished Elsewhere

Other cities have made significant progress in meeting the problems of segregation and in raising educational achievement through concerted efforts. In Washington, D.C., the need to desegregate the schools led to a planned attack on underachievement due to cultural handicaps and inferior education. In the years since 1955 there has been a general upgrading of achievement levels, through reduction in average class size, doubling of the number of special classes, and a fourfold increase in reading clinic staff (12). For example, in spite of the fact that the school population of the District of Columbia is predominately composed of pupils whose cultural and economic backgrounds are apt to be limited, the sixth grade class in 1959 reached or exceeded the national norms in five out of six achievement tests, whereas in 1956 the sixth grade class was below norms in all six tests.

In a two-year period (1958-1960) in the St. Louis Schools, achievement at eighth grade level was raised from an average of 5 to 6 months below the national norms to slightly higher than the norms (13). An article in Time Magazine described the improvement as based on meetings with parents, increased homework, and a concentrated attack on motivation, with the result that twice as many eighth graders were ready for top-track high school work. "At one school, where only 28% of first-and second-graders were reading at the national norm last June, the rate has soared to 57.2% by January" (14).

A demonstration guidance project in one junior high school in New York City was begun in September 1956. An enriched curriculum, remedial reading, special help in mathematics, and sufficient guidance services were provided. The result has been increased attainment and motivation to complete a college preparatory course (8).

Summary and Conclusions

The above statements represent the concern of the Commission on Human Relations for public education in Philadelphia. Much of it is based upon eight years of intensive observation and experience, and some of it is drawn by inference from research in other cities where conditions are approximately parallel to those in Philadelphia. There is sufficient evidence to pose a series of hypotheses as a basis for research. A great deal of further fact finding is essential, however, before definitive conclusions can be drawn.

Concerning the several problems raised the Commission draws the following tentative conclusions:

1. De facto segregation in the public schools is a major and growing problem. All present trends point to an increase in segregation.

The solution to this problem is largely dependent upon factors outside the schools. However, the school authorities can do several things to slow down and alter the present trend:

- (a) Improving the quality of education in every school will do a great deal to check the flight of white families from neighborhoods of racial change. Confidence in the quality of education is a major factor in countering the flight to the suburbs.

(b) Affirmative measures should be taken to assure a more even distribution of white and Negro teachers in all school systems.

(c) Negro teachers should be encouraged to apply for teaching positions in suburban areas and suburban school authorities required, under the state F.E.P. law, to employ on merit without regard to race. Conversely, white teachers should be encouraged to seek teaching positions in predominantly Negro schools. (The objectives here is balanced distribution, not to suggest that Negroes teach in white schools only or vice versa.)

(d) Further research should be conducted to determine whether de facto segregation per se is conducive to lower educational standards. If such is determined, affirmative measures to desegregate such schools regardless of residential pattern should be explored. However, further research may show that it is not de facto segregation, per se, that determines the quality of education but that the school which has gone through racial change becomes psychologically abandoned and that the remedy lies in special attention to those schools. Recognition of this probability in advance would enable school authorities to take preventive action.

2. It may be anticipated that even if the most aggressive efforts to desegregate are pursued a large proportion of the Negro children of this generation and for some years to come will attend segregated schools.

Therefore, a great deal of time, effort, research, experimentation, and all requisite resources should be directed to compensate for the cultural deficiencies of the less privileged segments of the population. This remedy is to be found almost entirely within the school system and demands substantially increased funds plus considerable reorientation in the thinking of both the public and the school authorities.

Specific and detailed recommendations are not presented here because it is believed that the Public School Administration in Philadelphia has developed the necessary formula in the special project for the culturally deprived being financed by the Ford Foundation. Since that is no more than a demonstration it will become necessary to provide public financing for comparable programs in all of the areas where the need exists.

3. Sufficient financing should be provided to bring the counselling staff up to the necessary strength to genuinely meet the need. The great need and value of counselling as a corrective to the problems of the minority groups should be recognized. Counselling directors should be encouraged to recognize the special guidance needs of children of various cultural and racial groups. Counselling should not be "color blind"; it should be "realistic" in an affirmative sense, not in an accomodationist sense.

4. Programs for open-mindedness and democratic human relations such as exist in the Philadelphia system should be not only encouraged but made as mandatory as possible commensurate with a non-authoritarian philosophy of education. However, research to evaluate the effectiveness of such programs is indicated.

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